



Legislative Update & Questionnaire

Your
Opinions
Count!



***For the people of the
15th Legislative District
encompassing Yakima,
Benton, Klickitat and
Skamania counties.***

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Sen. Jim Honeyford

Rep. Barb Lisk

Rep. Bruce Chandler

Dear friends,

The state Legislature will convene again in January, and although the 2000 session is scheduled for just 60 days, lawmakers will face some critical decisions that will affect you and your family.

The passage of Initiative 695 has stirred a debate over government spending and efficiency. The voters have repealed most of the motor vehicle excise tax, and now it is up to lawmakers to protect important services, such as public safety, transportation and education. Despite the threats of cuts by those who opposed the initiative, we think the Legislature can get the job done without hurting these important services.

There have been new setbacks in our ongoing effort to implement a comprehensive, long-term water policy for the Yakima River Basin. A report on the latest developments is included inside.

As always, we are very interested in your thoughts on these and other issues that are likely to be addressed by the Legislature. We hope you'll take a moment to complete the attached survey. Your opinions are important to us because they help us represent you more effectively. If you have questions or concerns about any state government issue, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your state legislators.

Sincerely,

Jim Honeyford
State Senator

Barb Lisk
State Representative

Bruce Chandler
State Representative

Water Update

Local watershed planning effort stalled

Recent actions by the Washington state Department of Ecology (DOE) have potentially brought a halt to a two-year local watershed planning effort in the Yakima Valley. The DOE's decision to work outside the local planning process could undermine a great deal of hard work put forth by county officials, local water users and others who comprised the local planning effort that was established by state law in 1997.

This has serious implications for our local economy and our agricultural industry. We hope that all parties — tribal, state and local — will work together to develop a comprehensive watershed plan that will meet the needs of all local water users.

Five-year moratorium on new wells

The DOE plan calls for a five-year moratorium on any groundwater withdrawals in the Yakima Basin. (Domestic wells remain exempt.) The five-year moratorium on groundwater withdrawals is expected to be in effect until a multi-million-dollar study of groundwater management is complete. However, local plan-

ners had already contracted with an independent professional third party to conduct a similar groundwater study. We question this duplication of effort.

Most disappointing is that local planners were not asked to participate in the discussion that led to the agreement on the moratorium. Furthermore, it appears they will no longer have a seat at the table. The Department of Ecology has cut residents, businesses and farmers in the Yakima Valley out of the decision-making process.

We have been meeting with the governor and other officials over the past several weeks to find a way to keep local citizens involved in the watershed planning effort. Because the people who live in the Yakima River Basin will be the ones affected most by the recommendations set forth in any watershed plan, local participation should be a priority. We remain hopeful that the local planning process will continue and that the needs of all water users in the Yakima Valley will be met.

Watch for water meetings

Meetings on water use and watershed management are being planned in Ellensburg and Yakima to provide more information to citizens. Please watch your local news for more details and plan to attend one of these meetings.

Fall brings good news on Yakima River

We're happy to see evidence that the sound conservation efforts by many hardworking people are paying off. An abundance of fall chinook and coho are making their way up the mainstem of the



Yakima River, prompting the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to open two extended sports seasons this fall. The lower Yakima, from Highway 240 to just below Prosser Dam, was opened through October. Sportfishing has also been opened from Nov. 15 to Dec. 31 from Union Gap to just below Roza Dam. (Check with DFW's South Central Region office in Yakima on specific regulations. Its phone number is (509) 575-2740.)

It's great to see this success after all the hard work that has been put into enhancing Yakima River habitat and fish runs.

Legislative Questionnaire

Give us your opinion!

With the approval of Initiative 695, lawmakers will be looking at significant government reform measures. Your views are extremely important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey. Once completed, refold the newsletter so our return address appears on the outside and mail it to us. (A first-class postage stamp is required.)

1) Current case law prohibits the state Legislature from opening up government services to competitive bid if those services have traditionally been performed by state employees. Would you support a law allowing government to contract with private business if it meant services could be delivered at a lower cost?

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Yes
☐ ☐ No

2) Would you support getting the state out of the liquor sales business, and limiting the state's role to regulating liquor sales by private retailers?

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Yes
☐ ☐ No

3) Would you support allowing employers to purchase workers compensation insurance for their employees through the private sector rather than requiring them to purchase it from the Department of Labor and Industries?

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Yes
☐ ☐ No

4) Which best describes your opinion of the regulatory environment in Washington?

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ It is too great a burden on families and small business.
☐ ☐ We generally have a good regulatory environment.
☐ ☐ We need more regulations to protect people.

5) Would you support an effort by the Legislature to clean up the law books by eliminating current statutes that are redundant, unnecessary or outdated?

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Yes
☐ ☐ No

6) Through prudent fiscal policies and continued support of the state spending limit, the Legislature has returned nearly \$3 billion to Washington taxpayers and created a surplus of nearly \$1 billion. What do you think is the best use of the surplus revenue? (Check all that you agree with.)

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Spend part of it to enhance and create programs.
☐ ☐ Spend all of it to enhance and create programs.
☐ ☐ Save it as a contingency for possible economic downturn.
☐ ☐ Provide more tax relief.
☐ ☐ Other:

7) Which best describes how you would like government to respond to Initiative 695?

(Check all you agree with.)

Voter 1 Voter 2

☐ ☐ Propose new taxes to replace the lost tax revenue so no spending cuts are needed.
☐ ☐ Look for efficiencies and spending reductions in low-priority areas to maintain support for important services, such as public safety and education.
☐ ☐ Find ways to deliver services more efficiently, such as competitive bidding for services.
☐ ☐ Make cuts across the board (approximately 2 percent).
☐ ☐ Use part of the surplus to make up for lost revenue, but not to launch new programs.

8) The last two major health insurance providers offering individual health insurance policies in Washington have announced that they will no longer offer such policies in our state. This means that people who do not have access to group insurance have only one choice: government-run health care. Which approach do you support for restoring our state's health care system?

Voter 1 Voter 2

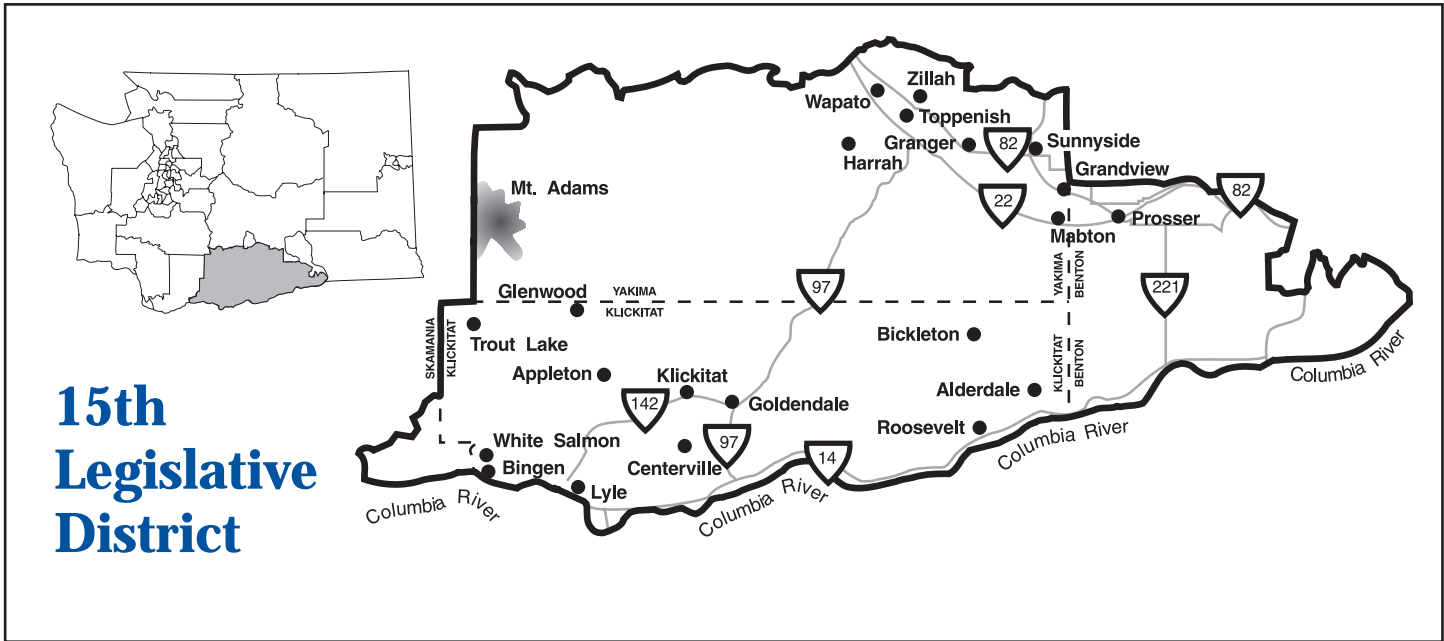
☐ ☐ Let the government assume control of our health care.
☐ ☐ Bring more private insurance carriers back into the marketplace to increase competition and give consumers more health care plans to choose from.

Thank you for your input!



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Survey Enclosed